

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3553

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2338

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ADEKUNLE

REF: LAGOS 2024

1. IN A CHANCE CONVERSATION FEBRUARY 24, BRIGADIER BENJAMIN ADEKUNLE ASKED ME ABOUT PRESS REPORTS OF NORMALIZATION OF GULF/MPLA RELATIONSHIP AND US SALE OF TWO JET AIRCRAFT TO ANGOLA. HIS QUESTION WAS PROMPTED BY FACT THAT HIS NEGOTIATING WITH VARIOUS SUPPLIERS (INCLUDING AMERICAN FIRMS) TO BUY MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF FOOD (WHEAT, RICE, FLOUR, SUGAR, MILK POWDER, BEEF, LAMB AND PORK) FOR AIR DELIVERY TO LUANDA. (UNTIL LUANDA'S REFRIGERATING EQUIPMENT IS REPAIRED, ADEKUNLE HAS TO HOLD OFF ON THE MEAT DELIVERIES.) ADEKUNLE IS ALSO SEEKING SUPPLIERS FOR MILITARY TRUCKS AND FATIGUE UNIFORMS AND ARMY BOOTS FOR THE MPLA. PAYMENT FOR ALL THESE SUPPLIES WOULD BE MADE FROM -\$100 MILLION BEING HELD IN LAGOS BANKS ON MPLA ACCOUNT.

2. ADEKUNLE IS WORRIED ABOUT DIRECT AIR TRANSPORT FROM US TO LUANDA, FEARING CAB DISAPPROVAL. HIS IDEA HAS BEEN TO "LAUNDER" THE TRANSACTION BY SELLING TO SPANISH, LEBANESE OR OTHER MIDDLEMEN, WHO WOULD IN TURN TRANSFER THE SUPPLIES TO LUANDA. HE TALKS
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ABOUT USING A DC-10. ADEKUNLE THINKS THIS MIDDLEMAN ARRANGEMENT

MIGHT BE UNNECESSARY IF USG ATTITUDE TOWARD COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANGOLA IS BECOMING "MORE PRAGMATIC."

3. ADEKUNLE CLAIMS THAT CUBANS IN LUANDA HAVE TOLD HIM THEY WOULD NOT ACCEPT FOODSTUFFS FROM THE US UNLESS HE COULD ASSURE THEM "THE CIA" WOULD NOT POISON IT AS THEY DID WITH CUBAN SUGAR BACK IN BAY OF PIGS DAYS."

4. ADEKUNLE SHOWS HIMSELF AS PRO-US, ANTI-BRITISH, ANTI-SOVIET AND ANTI-GERMAN. HE STATES CATEGORICALLY THAT THE UK WAS BEHIND THE RECENT COUP ATTEMPT. IT STILL RANKLES THAT THE US DID NOT HELP THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DURING THE CIVIL WAR, AND HE SAYS HE IS ANGRY THAT THE US IGNORES AFRICA, DOESN'T APPRECIATE NIGERIA, AND WON'T GIVE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO US INVESTORS AND TRADERS IN AFRICA. HE CRITICIZES PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER AND US POLICY ON ANGOLA. YET HE PROFESSES STRONG ADMIRATION FOR THE US, ITS FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM, AND THE RELEVANCE FOR NIGERIA OF US EXPERIENCE AND TECHNIQUES. HE HATES THE GERMANS, HE SAYS, BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS KILLED BY THEM. AS FOR THE SOVIETS, HE IS GRATEFUL FOR THEIR SUPPORT DURING THE CIVIL WAR BUT SAYS "WE WOKE UP TO WHAT THEY WANTED WHEN WE FOUND THAT POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION ACCOMPANIES EVERYTHING THEY DO FOR US, INCLUDING THE IRON AND STEEL FIASCO AND THEIR TRAINING OF OUR PILOTS."

5. ADEKUNLE IS REPORTEDLY WELL CONNECTED WITH CURRENT FMG LEADERSHIP, BUT AS DEPARTMENT AWARE HE HAS IN THE PAST PROVED MERCURIAL, UNSTABLE AND GIVEN TO EXCESSES THAT HAVE TURNED MANY AGAINST HIM. APPRICIATING ADEKUNLE'S REPUTATION FOR SHADY BUSINESS DEALS, WE REPORT ABOVE PROPOSITION FOR DEPARMENT'S INFORMATION AND ANY COMMENT IT MAY HAVE TO OFFER. INTER ALIA, WE WOULD APPRICIATE GUIDANCE ON QUESTION OF COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS WITH ANGOLA. WIRELESS FILE REPORT FOR TRATTNER AND NESSEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT GULF/CABINDA IMPLIES ROOM FOR NAMEUVER.
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